7: Marroquin E-5 (1955) 1957 NU31 Seri NU31

In general, the Seris have a healthy appearance; the most frequent complaints are gastro-intestinal and visual defects due to avitaminosis. It is very possible that given the difficult living conditions resulting from the desert environment, a rigorous selective process among the newborn takes place so that only those who possess exceptional physical qualities survive. This explains why the majority of them retain the physical characteristics described by Hardy more than a century ago: "the Indians of Isla Tiburón are tall, healthy and well built". 164 147 142

In spite of attempts at education, the Seris do not practice the elemental rules of hygiene; their way of life, neglecting this aspect, contributes to increase the unhealthy foci which exist in the places where they have established themselves. 515 751

Dwellings.—The Seris retain many vestiges of their nomadic life, among them the hut which serves as their living quarters; many of them are simple provisional arrangements for sheltering themselves from wind and sun, and they bear no relationship to the stability and durability of our dwellings. The Seri hut was made to meet the necessities of a nomadic people who had no reason to spend much time nor work on making a dwelling which would only be used for a season (one, two or at the most three months). Nevertheless, some innovations have been introduced in the last 20 years, so that we must distinguish between two types of houses. The primitive model consists of a series of scrub pine arches interwoven with branches from the same shrub almost totally covered by foliage, tortoise shells, *zacate*, etc., with only a small hole in one of its ends as an entrance (this type of hut is the same that McGee saw in 1894 when the Seris still led a nomadic life). 342 [221] [177]

In the new model more resistent woods are used, like *sahueso*, *torote*, etc., and poles, between which is laid a layer mud. The house is rectangular, without windows; with only one entrance, but always larger than the entrance to the brush hut. Other models would have to be added to these two, due to the incorporation and utilization of tents made in the United States which some U. S. tourists or the Society of Friends have given them. The tent is used as permanent living quarters; or sometimes combined with branches to cover the primitive type huts. 342 178 [177]

Domestic Animals.—The Seris are very fond of domestic animals like the dog, cat, and finally, the chicken. For all practical purposes these animals live together with the family; they rest on the piles of rags and sand which serve the Indians as beds; lick the plates and cooking utensils; dirty the house; increase the household fauna with their fleas and other vermin thus contributing to create and unhealthy atmosphere in the home. 231 [136]

Problems of Intoxication.—Their dealings with the fish buyers, in whose stores are sold beer, mezcal and tequila, has turned them to the consumption of these drinks. The Seri drinks liquor in an uncontrolled 273 [275]

7: Marroquin E-5 (1955) 1957 NU31 Seri NU31

way. Since the preparation of the drinks served to them is not very hygienic, they often produce severe gastro-intestinal upsets and even affect their vision. 273 [164]

Demographic Data

The following chart shows the population distribution by age groups: 162

SERI POPULATION BY AGE GROUPS AND SEXES
(as of December 31, 1955)

	Men	*Women*
Less than 1 year	4	3
From 1 to 5 years	10	11
From 6 to 10 years	15	12
From 11 to 15 years	15	16
From 16 to 20 years	13	14
From 21 to 25 years	4	1
From 26 to 30 years	7	15
From 31 to 35 years	16	13
From 36 to 40 years	5	2
From 41 to 45 years	2	2
From 46 to 50 years	3	6
From 51 to 55 years	5	5
From 56 to 60 years	—	—
From 61 to 65 years	4	2
From 66 to 70 years	1	2
From 71 to 75 years	—	3
From 76 to 80 years	—	1
From 81 to 85 years	2	—
From 86 to 90 years	—	—
From 91 to 95 years	1	—
Total	107	108

The pyramid of ages formed by the data of the above chart does not present the usual characteristics of a young community in full growth, as is common in the Indian villages; rather it is closer to the old communities, with predomination of the working age groups over the infant and old age groups.

Work

The population able to work can be calculated as that between 11 and 65 years of age; because even though they begin to work very early, the cycle of economic productivity is very long. Calculation of that population gives us the following figures: 464

231 which was kept around as a pet and it was interesting that the Indians who held it captive took considerable pains to look after it. This I noticed also with such few pet birds as they had. On the contrary, the large number of dogs which these Indians keep are left much to their own devices and are rarely fed. They are treated with lordly indifference and are treated as one Indian said to me "as you treat the dogs" which meant with a kick, stone and fist and forced to feed on the offal left on beaches. Yet, no Seri would ever think of deliberately killing a dog, unless drunk. Although there is obviously little use for the dogs, each family keeps many of them. Sometimes as many as a dozen of these miserable curs live in the compound of one Serian family.

● [273]

Taxonomy and Recognition

825 From the responses given, the Seri tend to split the mammals into two groups, the mammals proper and the group of animals which to them seem neither mammals nor fish. Evidently the possession of fur is of paramount importance here because it had been mentioned as a mammalian feature for several of the species. The Seri then put the *Cetacea* in a group of their own perhaps on these grounds. To be sure, the designation is somewhat hazy. The whale, the informants said, "is not fish nor mammal." The killer whale has also been referred to by them as a "whale-like animal." Finally, the dolphin one of the informants said was "like a shark. It lays eggs like a shark." But another informant thought it was "a mammal-like whale" although his response was obviously uncertain. That the presence of fur must be the main distinguishing feature is obvious in that they have no doubt about the mammalian position of the sea lion and that, while uncertain about the position of the bat, they are inclined to classify it with the mammals. As one informant put it "it can be of smilar kind to the coyote. It is not a bird because it has fur. Fur is not what the birds have."

Otherwise they are fairly good at the recognition of those individual species that are well known to them or that are frequently encountered in the area. The jaguar, called also *el tigre*, is known from hearsay only, owing to its extreme rarity in the immediate area of Desemboque. Porcupine is well recognized due to its peculiar features. But it must be rare and José Juan Moreno who saw it only once thought it was a "mammal." But he had no difficulty in recognizing a picture of it or associating the Spanish name *porcospino* with it. A somewhat moot point is the cácomistle. This animal evidently is not well known and, from the report, had been surely confused with some other creature. Finally, while the jaguarundi is surely found in the area it is also little known. Having to work with pictures I cannot in any way verify the Seri responses, especially since the picture used was not of the best kind for the identification purposes. A Mexican trader had a multilated skin of one, but he sold it to a visitor before I had time to query the informants about it.

[124]

[P 11 A]

285 [824] I watched a woman make a basket. She used young branches from the terote tree, I think *terote blanco*. The bark was peeled and shredded into two parts, the heart taken out and kept separate. The coils of the round part were put in a pot of hot water to soften, and the edge of the basket was soaked a little in hot water. The center of the coils or woof consisted of six or eight strips of heart while the outer sap wood was woven around in regular coil-weave fashion.

[287] [412] A brad of deer shin-bone sharpened on pumice to a needle point was used as a brad. With this brad she split the fiber, held one piece in her mouth, and stripped the back down. Then she punched a hole in the bone brad, inserted the sharp end of the fiber and pulled it almost through. She then repeated the operation, adding a strip of heart once in a while. These baskets are coarse and unattractive, but they are hard and tough and stand heavy use.

323 Cooking vessels consist of two or three cooking ollas that nest together to facilitate transportation. These are made of coarse clay, solely for utility without regard for beauty of shape, color or design. In burning these ollas they use the shell of the sea turtle. [237] [372] The cells of the shell are filled with a fine oil and this burns the ollas. On most of the other places on the mainland, the Indians use cow chips, or dried droppings to fire the clay.

283 484 123 We proposed to shift camp to Tinajanita, our first landing place, where Herrera was to meet us in two days with the Chief and some of his men. Since it was blowing, he said the men couldn't fish and they would be on land probably hunting, so he would be able to see them. [271] At this time they gathered *mescal* on an island off the west coast to make the liquor they used at fiestas, weddings and other celebrations.

Herrera left at five o'clock in the morning, with a swinging gait, for the opposite side of the Island. The distance around by boat would be fifty miles, and across, only about twenty or twenty-five---a full day's trip and hard, as mountains would have to be crossed and the rocks were sharp and the way difficult.

123 We had breakfast on rice and bread. Our rations are running low and we expect to move this morning. We made arrangements about the native boat and saw Blanco trot off with two five-gallon cans for water, a distance of ten miles. We went to the camp to get a few things---an old basket, a Pelican hide and other things, and then we asked the help of everybody to get the boat down to water---the tide was very low. The one man, the women and five of us were required to drag and push the boat to water.

We waved goodbye, loaded her up and then rowed against the tide and wind for miles, and finally landed in a lovely sheltered lagoon, built our fire and had lunch. A few crabs were speared, and late in the afternoon the wind shifted. We loaded the boat again and pushed off for Tinajanita, our first landing place. After rowing, we raised

[Text continues on p.174]